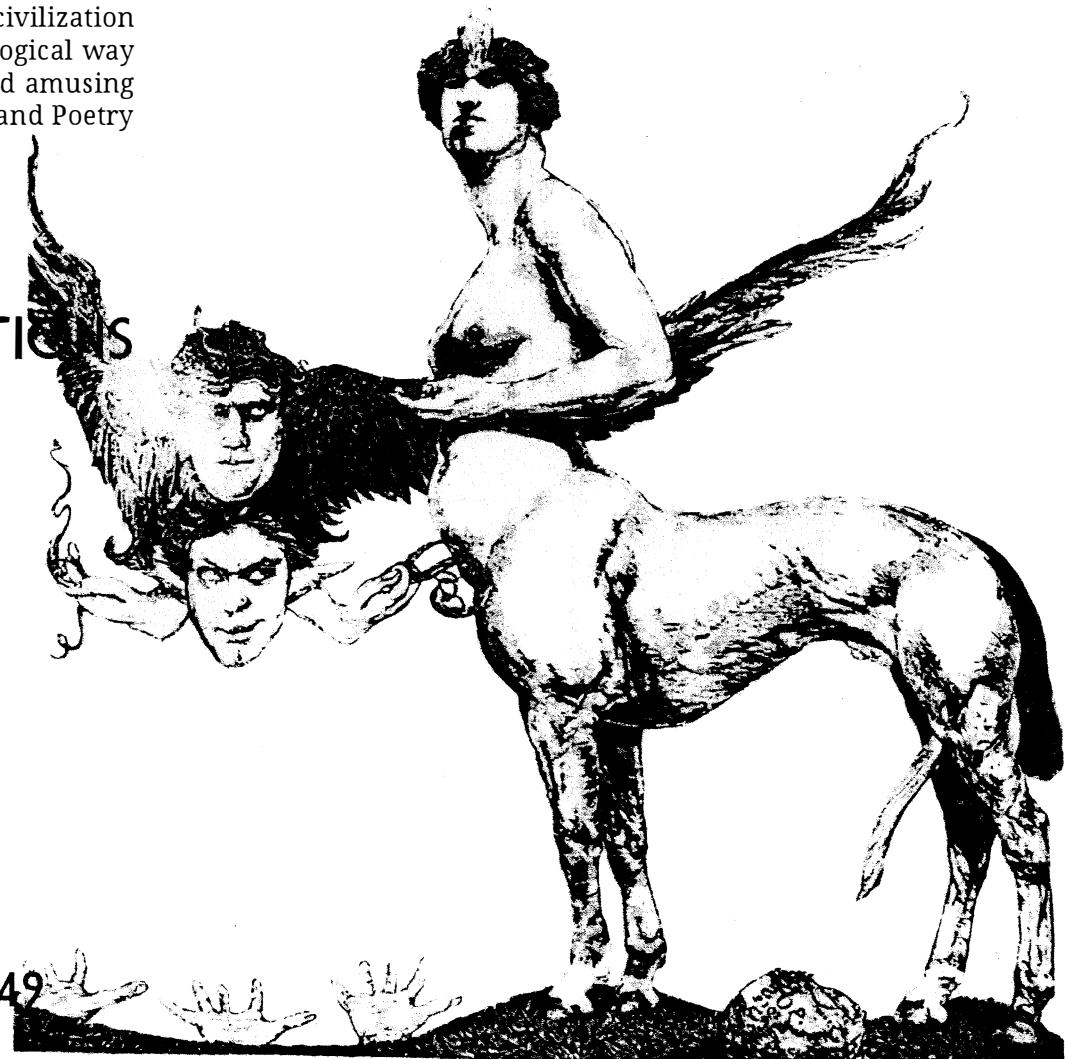
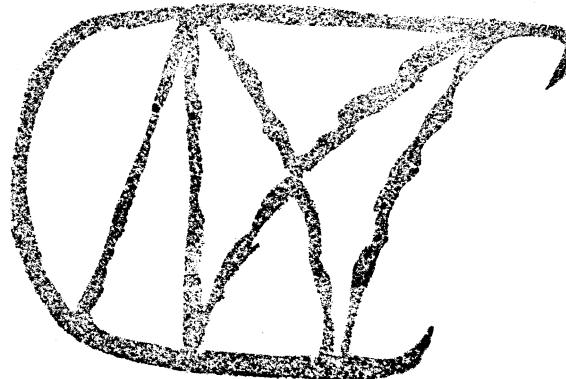


Largely forgotten today, Benjamin De Casseres was a demonic magician of the pen who gained notoriety (and an underground readership) in the 1920's and thirties for his acerbic columns in H.L. Mencken's papers *The American Mercury*, *The Smart Set* and *The Free Lance*. While other writers pretend to defy the categories, De Casseres was the real deal and regardless of whatever literary influences he may have absorbed throughout his life, De Casseres' philosophical reflections always come out as something unprecedented (and deeply nourishing). The absolutely boundless character of De Casseres' mind took him into captivating investigations of Nietzsche, Robinson Jeffers, Percy Shelley, Individualism, Collectivism and, in the case of the imaginative fable Chiron the Centaur, the nature of civilization itself. In critiquing the gigantic fraud of civilization De Casseres refuses to use civilized English in a linear, logical way and instead approaches the entire language as a vast and amusing game—eventually settling upon the word-magic of Myth and Poetry to explode the very structure of civilized "reason".

CHIRON THE CENTAUR

BY BENJAMIN DE CASSERES

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Old Chiron, the wisest of the Centaurs, gathers his progeny around him and expounds to them what he ironically calls his “scrap-wisdom”.

My children, I have lived on this Earth for nearly six thousand years. I am coming to the end of my days, when I shall be gathered to the spirit of my father and mother, whom you know as Pan and Astarte, whose twin beings pervade this visible and incomprehensible universe like life pervades your members.

Our father, Pan, who is Desire, lives through every star that glitters over our heads, and our mother, Astarte, who is Beauty, is the Inspiration of Mind. We centaurs are their first-born, and we shall last until Mind-Time, with its infinitely involved patterns, rolls up like a vast carpet and Space-Matter has shriveled to a final atom, and Chaos, another name for our father Pan, shall close his eyes never to open them again.

In this beautiful interlude, my children, between that which is and that which will be, we rovers of this star are its quintessence, its Ecstasy and Contemplation, for all that vibrates with life can be reduced to those two modes of being, and, indeed, in the final analyses they are one: Ecstasy—for even pain is the ecstasy of contraction.

I am old and wise, as they say among men, and that which I tell you is the distilled consciousness of what my ears have heard, my eyes have seen, my members have stored up and my mind has stored in its honey-hive of cells.

I said I was wise, children, for, as you know, mortals call me Chiron, the wisest of the centaurs. But all our wisdom is relative to our temperaments. What I call **my** wisdom may not be **your** wisdom, for all wisdom is scrap-wisdom. Only Pan, our father, and Astarte, our mother, know the heart of the Logos, and they are as eternally silent as our graves.

Naturally, the youngest among you Earth-rascals cannot believe that in a thousand years you will be as old and contemplative as I am, that the wine-drunken revels in which your mind and flesh now beat like the throb of new suns and the tumescent lechery with which you now pursue the air-polished flanks of nymphs, will gradually, almost imperceptibly, abate their furies, and finally cease like a great flame breathed upon by a frost-footed wind from the mountains.

Your reed-pipes will alone remain to you, for all dies except music—and on lonely mountain heights beneath the mocking Moon you will still, with something of the semblance of your old passion, call to phantom nymphs who flee you in an always dissolving memory.

But, my children, you must not believe this, you must not believe **me**, while there is one lustful sense agape, one pulse of sensual desire in your nethers or one passionate poem still to be made to the belly of the grape or to the curiously sculpted navel in the belly of a nymph.

Illusion is the reality of your youth, and what I call my reality, *my wisdom*, may be the illusion of age. For as a mortal who lived more than a thousand years ago, George Santayana, said: "The wiseacres, too, are comic, and their mask is one of the most harmlessly amusing in the human museum".

Wisdom, then, among us centaurs is the perpetuation of the comic and the manifestation of our wills—at *any cost*. We must excite men to lawless and serio-comic deeds; to impregnate them with something of our hybrid natures and to prick their imaginations with the itch for the impossible.

Centaur-nature knows only one law—*pleasure*. Make pictures of your pains, and when you are heavy with sadness use your snagged and jagged teeth to bite mournful poems in your hearts.

Centaur-blood is unspoiled. We are the inheritors in our corpuscles of all the elements of Earth, fluid and solid, fecal and ethereal, sour and sweet. When our centaur-seed flies like soundless thunderbolts into our nymphs they carry with them in their uterine crucibles the essences of plants, rivers, mountains, perfumes, birds, beasts, storms, grasses and fruits—of all that has been nursed to life by the Sun.

That strange word that men use, *morals*, has never corrupted us. Guard yourselves, O my children, against the coming of a *moral system*, the mutilator and enslaver of men.

Keep yourselves pure in your lusts, pure in your wars, pure in your instincts and desires. Let them flow from you like mountain-springs. Conscience in centaurs, as in men, means expulsion from the Eden of Innocence.

The centuries roll over you in their inexorable flight and melancholy hours will fall upon you when you behold the decay of men and their arts and civilizations and when you see the spiders of ironic futility weaving their black-webbed shrouds over their loftiest ideals.

For you will both love and hate this thing Man, his epical absurdities, his childish belief in progress, his sweat of aimless toil, his curious will-to-absolutism, and his monkey-like greed. Mock him, but harm him not, this Polonius of a star.

Old Chiron has wept and laughed for six thousand years as he spied on men. Old Chiron has poured for many of them a goblet of forgetfulness and

That is the man-part of me. But the beast in us and of us is wiser. To lie in the sun and rhythmically swish flies from our rumps—is not that as useful an occupation as any?

You may remember too, my children, how their stinking bodies in one of these wars poisoned all our streams, killing the rare and beautiful fish, and how even the sharks in the sea were infected, and how their curious machines destroyed our subtle-voiced forests and their choral birds, and how our gorgeously-colored butterflies—more beautiful than Helena's eyes—were asphyxiated by their mephitic gases that filled the Earth like the fabled anal explosions of Saturn.

And yet this Man was not at fault. His nature is a fatal gift, or curse, that is impregnate with an innate and ineradicable urge to slay.

I had hoped at that time—and Man still civilizes and kills—that he would destroy his civilizations utterly and return to the condition of happy and unprogressive savagery, to the muds of the good earth and to bearskins. But it seems he is too far advanced in the disease of civilization to ever get rid of it even with poison gases, bullets and bombs.

He has a beautiful legend of an Eden. This legend is, in fact, a wish-thought; an escape from his frustrations, laws, taboos, suppressions and the eternal guardian of all civilizations—the policeman.

That stench which sometimes comes to us on the wind as if the Earth had suddenly given up the contents of her privies—well, that is the bad breath of man's civilized and domesticated soul.

My children, I have seen more civilizations made and unmade than you have scratches on your behinds. And they have all been the same—sublime gropings to attain more happiness through more slavery.

And yet these civilizations of his are all that Man has to mark his road from an excremental beginning to an ignominious end.

We centaurs have had our wars too, but we have had no civilizations. I, Chiron, am not civilized in spite of this wise chit-chat of mine. I am only a contemplative beast, half man, half horse, a brain that meditates from time to time on its tail; a thing that moves over the waters and hills of the Earth for no other reason than that I am, like you, ordained to move and act perpetually by the inherent urge of some insane energetic Consciousness over which even our father Pan has no control.

And in these Rishi-like contemplations of mine I have sometimes wished that I were a full-man. I have wished to partake of his stupidities and his sublime out-reachings, to build cities and destroy them, and to partake of that sterile destiny that has no Whence or no Wither.

into their ears has whispered the way to redemptive transgressions. But few have listened well.

Men have the instinct of *liberty*, but few have the courage, and none the clear apprehension of it.

Liberty is the privilege of aristocratic courage, and nearly all men, in all times, are democrats.

Let us laugh, then, children, for laughter is Space, as Space is the terrible laughter of Time. Let us laugh with the laughter of goats and gods. Let your laughter set the stars a-dancing and crack open your bellies.

Centaur-laughter is a wine pressed from the grapes of centaur-knowledge. Let your laughter and the soft airs played on your Pandean pipes rock old Chiron to sleep on his mountain-top bed, for the Sun rises, and age sleeps best in the light of day.

Chiron awakes at noon, and, feeling five hundred years younger, pipes a passionate hymn to Light and then chases a butterfly for hours through valleys and over mountain-tops.

Children, I have been engaged in a game that is everlasting among men—chasing butterflies.

The butterfly I chased, over mountain-tops, in the depths of blue valleys and across streams that were as motionless as frozen light, I chased as a whim, which is the only motive for the actions of centaurs; not as a matter of principle, which seems to motivate every act of man, even when he strangles an honest bowel-chuckle in the cords of his sphincter.

My butterfly, with its wings of brazen gold and twilight brown, was almost as large as Chimera, which no mortal or centaur has ever caught.

We know that bird stuffed with wind, with its painted glass eyes and its songs of Cockayne. It is the *Vampire of Tomorrow* and it roosts on horizons eternally inaccessible to man, who pursues it with the pop-gun of his hopes.

No, my children, I did not catch my butterfly—I never do. To catch butterflies is fatal. They exist to fly and to be chased.

Many men catch their butterflies and pin them on the walls of reality, where they rot. Dreams are to be dreamed, thoughts are to be thought, and nymphs are to be entered—all the rest is illusion.

Once upon a time, children, I had a great friend among the mortals. His name was Goethe. He was blessed with centaur blood and was tickled by an immortal itch.

He was a poet, and among his famous creations—now washed away forever in the floods of Time, which makes all things obsolete except illusion—was a man called Faust.

Faust made a compact with Mephistopheles, a blithe and pitiless fellow who *manufactured* butterflies for Faust, which is as fatal as capturing a real one.

In this compact was a clause: If Faust said to a passing moment, "Stay! Thou art ever fair!" Mephistopheles would claim his soul for Hell, a mythical place of torture invented by those who have for those who want.

You see, even Mephistopheles knew that a caught butterfly is a dead butterfly.

After a wild centaurian bacchanale, during which the hills groaned with the thunder of hoofs and the ground absorbed great waves of wine-dyed seminal fluid, Chiron, squatted on his gibbous hams, talks in a delightful hung-over fashion about civilization.

Evohe!—and blessings on this old Chironian gullet and this good horsebelly of mine that have washed down and consumed more wine in the last six thousand years than was ever contained in all the belchy stomachs of all man-worms!

While you are nymphing on the grass, my little ones, I must tell you that last night's rouse in the hills renewed my limbs, and at dawn this morning I galloped over mountains and hurtled across streams as I did four thousand years ago in my lustihood in Hellas, when I cut the winds like the arrows of Diana and my golden tail was taken for an Earth-visiting comet by the shepherds of the hills.

In my flight this morning, while most of you were still wine-drugged, I passed through a great city.

The inhabitants heard in their drowse the clatter of my hoofs on their street; but they all thought, no doubt, that it was winter thunder or the rumble of their guts heard in a dream.

It was what Man calls a civilized city, with ornate jails which the tomfool calls "homes", and miles of stores where they buy and sell things of no greater value than the humblest flower that we centaurs ram in our rears to tickle to life the erotic laughter of the mermaids on the coastal isles as we gallop up and down on the sands, and machines to carry them at great speeds from nowhere to nowhere, from which they look at everything and see nothing, and universities crammed with books that record their immortal ignorance and professors who catapult wooden words from wooden skulls into the ears of boys and girls whose minds are really centered on more palpable doings—and the rest of those infinitely varied and highly evolved urban customs and habits that only a bombinating colonic irrigation from Momus could ever wash away.

They had a war about a thousand years ago, which some of you will remember was really the beginning of a series of world-wars. As we centaurs are adepts at pleasure and loafing, so these *civilized* men are such adepts at butchering one another—victims of the Higher Biological Instincts—that even the savages became civilized in order to learn the finer arts of mass-annihilation.

There are no jealous gods and there is no origin of things which any stone covers. Things do not descend or ascend, for there is no *place* from which things could descend or no *place* toward which they are going.

There are only relations—correspondences—and that which man believes is past is always present and future and that which is future was and is.

These trees, these rivers, these stars, these winds with their surging rains and their pelting hail are here eternally. Their fading is a myth, their rebirth is a myth—a myth invented by the time-sense.

But there is a mystery, and all that is, breathing and breathless, is correspondent to this mystery, which is not veiled or unseen, but is naked and visible.

The essence of Mystery is its palpability, its tactility, its' perceptible presence. Man alone has affirmed that mystery is hidden, and with this error—or lie—he exploits his fellow-man.

But come, it is time to be drunken and sprawl in the sunset and to watch the great yellow spider that is called the Sun weave its web of night over our beloved Earth.

These dead butterflies turn poets into political realists and professors, which is the Hell, maybe, that my old friend Goethe meant. It was all so long ago, my children, that I am a little foggy as to just what he did mean.

Man has thus lost his satiric Edenic youth because he insists on *catching things*. He has lost his simultaneity and his spontaneity by trying to find out the *meaning* of things. The flood of his Being has run to trickles in the grooves of reason.

He dissolves stars in his spectrums. He reduces this hallucinating and Goblin-Space to mathematical formulas. He catches—so he believes—the divine witch of the universe, our mother, Astarte, and imprisons her in books on aesthetics. Forty thousand creeds have actually *caught* our father Pan/Chaos, in *word-traps*.

Your mountain-rocking mirth, my children, at *that* is wine to my soul! For is not the seriousness of man the woof and web of the belly-laughter of the satyrs and centaurs?

To man the world is a poem of desire. To the satyr and centaur brood it is a poem of accomplishment.

Man lives to chase the butterfly of Becoming. We live in Being, like an eternal beam of sunlight at the summit of a crashing waterfall.

Each one of your moments, my progeny, is definitive, as is each moment of the rose as it buds, flowers and fades; as is each moment of the Sun, each stroke of the phallus.

Therefore are we the true wisdom of Earth and Heaven, for we are the incarnate Moment.

But I grow too metaphysical, children, as you may notice by the slobber on my lips.

As I chased my butterfly I came upon a man standing on the edge of the sea whose muffled music falls upon your ears in the dead of night.

He was old and worn and his face was bitten with the acid of dead dreams and in his eyes was the hunger of death.

He could not see me, of course, for like the rest of men, reason had smothered sight.

I whispered in his ear:

"Plunge in, O futile mortal, and cleanse yourself of consciousness forever."

He did so—and so that is my good deed for today: I abridged a human being's suffering by many days.

A centaur has never been known to have committed suicide, for we have never found anything worth the pains of dying. We who live instinctively, without hope or *ennui*, are alone reconciled to the ways of the Universe. We have no Jesus and no Cain—being as natural as a tree, a stream or a bull.

And now Night, which is the breath of Eternity, clammers up from the valleys, the first star is overhead, and the Great Centaur of the Universe calls us to our erotic festivals.

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Old Chiron, after teaching the young centaurs how to charm the fish that swim in the sunlight with their reed-pipes, exercises by running up and down the perpendicular ladders of the wind, after which he plants his aged hams on a giant rose-bush and talks to his earth-gathered progeny on the secret laws of correspondence.

We earth-bubbles, children, know the laws of those secret correspondences that knit all things into a diaphanous whole and which are the causes of those sudden ecstasies, depressions, impulses and spurts of genius that puzzle man and make of him that pleasant buffoon who regales our melancholy hours.

The more Man reasons, as I told you all once before, the more he stumbles, for his reason kills his intuition. It is the iron rod that breaks the golden bowl.

I have watched him for these two thousand years abandon the Road to the Sun—the paths of secret correspondences (or "hunches", as those humorous Americans used to call them)—for the briars and jungles of logic.

Only the poets among men were ever aware of these secret correspondences, and by poets I mean all those who lived close to the body of Inner Necessity, those rare ones who knew that Imagination is the Universe of the Protagonists.

Knowledge is separation, and your old Chiron—alas!—is tainted with knowledge by a too-long association in his younger days with men. It is also not well to live too long on mountain-tops, for there we lose the wisdom of the dancing earth and substitute the *perception* of secret relations for *instinctive participation* in the secret relations themselves.

We, as well as men, as you all *feel*, are related to magical entities, to forms, to forces whose influence sways events on this star. They are the Destinies and Fates of those antique Greek poets, whose wisdom grew sick and died these several thousands of years ago with the birth of the time-sense, the progress-sense and the sin-sense among men.

The poets have died among men, and even their music, which was once the surge that carried them beyond their narrow mental horizons into the domain of identities and correspondences, has decayed on the plane of their own earth-level wills. What was once a song is now a gurgle.

Man uses such phrases as "esoteric" and "exoteric"—meaning an inside universe and an outside universe. They believe that some things are occult and some are visible. But to us inside and outside are the same; the visible and the invisible are one.